DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 476 400 CS 511 974

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TITLE	Students' Choice of Books during Self-Selected Reading.
PUB DATE	2003-05-00
NOTE	25p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Classroom Research; Grade 1; Primary Education; *Reading Material Selection; *Recreational Reading; *Supplementary Reading Materials
IDENTIFIERS	Book Availability; *Self Selection (Reading)

ABSTRACT

It is important for students to choose books that are at their instructional reading level. A future reading specialist investigated what types of books first-grade students choose, and if they choose books at their reading level during self-selected reading. She undertook a literature review and developed procedures for conducting the study. Data were collected for 10 days during March and April in a first-grade classroom of 18 students. Where the students got their books for the self-selected reading block was also examined. A total of 168 books were collected during the 10 days of data collection. Out of the 168 books, 19 were chosen that were below the instructional level, 61 were chosen on the instructional level, and 88 were chosen above the instructional level. Thus a total of 107 out of 168 books (63.7%) were not on the students' reading levels while 61 out of 168 (36.3%) were on the students' reading levels. During the study, the students got their books mainly from the classroom library (90 out of 168 books). The next higher number of books (66 out of 168) were chosen from the book baskets at the students' tables. Nine out of 168 books were chosen from the school library, and 3 out of 168 books were brought from home. Thus, the classroom teacher needs to make sure to provide a variety of books in his/her classroom that students will like, so they will be motivated to select those books. Attached are observation, stages of literacy development, and data results sheets. (Contains 11 references.) (NKA)

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Students' Choice of Books

During Self-Selected Reading

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Spring 2003

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Students' Choice of Books During Self-Selected Reading

Topic:

Do first grade students choose books on their instructional reading level during the Self-Selected Reading Block of their school day? Where do students get their books for the Self-Selected Reading Block?

Rationale:

As a future Reading Specialist, I am interested in knowing whether students choose books at their instructional level. Are the books they choose too easy or too difficult for them? Do students select books that are at their instructional level? Other questions to consider as I observe students during self-selected reading include the following: How much time is given for the self-selected reading block? Where do students find the books they choose to read (book baskets, classroom library, school library, or books brought from home)?

By investigating this topic, I can become more aware of what types of books students choose and if they are selecting books that are at their instructional reading level. According to Emmett Bett's criteria of reading levels, a book is at a student's instructional reading level if the student is able to read at least ninety-five percent of the words correctly, and if he/she is able to comprehend at least seventy-five percent of the text. By observing what books students choose, I will know what types of books and what reading levels are appropriate to have in a first grade classroom. I will also learn how much time is appropriate for self-selected reading and how to display books in a way that enhances their appeal to students.

It is important for students to choose books that are at their instructional reading level. If students are reading books that are too easy or too difficult, the teacher "may show them how to

choose books closer to their level" (Cunningham, Hall, & Sigmon, 1999). Students should feel successful while they read. They will feel more successful if they are reading books that are at their instructional reading level. When students consistently pick books that are too easy, they may not continue to grow in their reading ability. Likewise, if students pick books that are too difficult for them, they may become frustrated and begin to dislike reading. It is important for teachers and reading specialists to be aware of what reading levels are appropriate for their students, so students will continue to grow in their reading ability and not become frustrated.

Researching whether students select books on their instructional level can help teachers become better informed about these issues as well as what levels of books they should have in their classroom for students to read. The results of this study can also help teachers discover whether students typically choose books on their instructional level during an independent reading time such as the self-selected reading block. If students are not choosing books that are on their instructional reading level, teachers can learn about strategies to help their students select books at their instructional reading level. In addition to learning about what levels of books are appropriate for their students to read, they can also learn about the types of books that are available at different book levels. For example, there are both fiction and nonfiction books available at different reading levels for students. This is important because students should be exposed to a variety of genres when they read. Teachers can also use the information they learn from this study such as the types of books that are chosen and strategically match students' reading levels with books that are of interest to a particular age group.

Literature Review

Self-selection of books in recreational reading programs has been a trend for several years. Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) and Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) are two types of recreational reading programs (Kragler, 2000). Another type developed by Patricia Cunningham of Wake Forest University in 1990 is the self-selected reading block, part of the four-blocks model, which is a research-based approach for balanced literacy instruction (Spires, 1999). During the self-selected reading block, students listen to their teacher do a read-aloud, read books "on their level" from a variety of books, conference with the teacher, and share what they have read with their peers (Cunningham, 1999, p. 21). During this block of time, it is important to allow students to freely choose books that they want to read. Rasinski (1988) states, "Student interest and student choice should be an integral part of an elementary reading program if students are going to be turned onto reading and become lifelong readers" (as cited in Kragler & Nolley, 1996, p. 354). It is important for students to be involved in their reading, so they can become successful readers.

Allowing students to self-select their books results in more involvement and thus more motivation to read. According to Kragler (2000), "Self-selection allows students more latitude to be deeply involved with the learning process, thus fostering an interest in, as well as developing an ownership of, the reading process" (p. 133). Harmes and Lettow (1986), Lazar (1957), and Ohlausen and Jepsen (1992) (as cited in Kragler, 2000), state that "self-selection helps students make decisions about their reading: for example, the types of reading they are going to do, the types of ideas they will gain from their various reading experiences, and the reading levels of books or other materials; it also provides students with real purposes for reading" (p. 133). Students like to self select their books; "like adults, their tastes are varied and individual"

(Worthy, 2002, par. 6). A central question that reading educators ask themselves is, when students self-select their books, are they choosing books that are at an appropriate reading level for them?

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998), authors of *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, ask, "Is the difficulty of the text relative to the student's ability?" (p. 213). Students can be reading books at their independent level, instructional level, or frustrational level. Snow, Burns, and Griffith (1998) quote Harris and Sipay's (1975) definition of the reading levels: "The independent level is the highest level at which a child can read easily and fluently: without assistance. . .; the instructional level is the highest level at which the child can do satisfactory reading provided that he or she receives preparation and supervision from a teacher. . .; [and] the frustration level is the level at which the child's reading skills break down. . . ." (p. 213). Reading educators have related Olson's theory of child development to reading to help them answer this central question. Olson (1959) states, "Children will seek and select from the environment experiences that are consistent with their developmental levels" (as cited in Kragler, 2000, p. 134). Thus, according to Olson in Kragler (2000), students "will self-select books at levels appropriate for them" (p. 134). Several studies have been conducted to determine if students chose books that fit their reading level; however, not all of the studies conducted support Olson's theory that students choose books that are appropriate for them.

In one study conducted by Hiebert, Mervar, and Person (1990), "Less able readers chose easier books than did more able students" (as cited in Kragler, 2000, p. 134). However, other research shows that poor readers read books that are too difficult for them while above-average readers read books that are too easy for them. According to Kragler (2000), average readers chose books that were above, below, and on their reading levels. In Fresch's (1995) study of six-

year-olds, she found that "children read several books that would be considered easy for their particular instructional levels, followed by selection of a new, more difficult text. The difficult text was generally well above their instructional levels" (p. 223). Kragler (2000) states that several studies conducted by such researchers as Fresch (1995), Jenkins (1955), Smith and Joyner (1990), and Timion (1992) show a "yo-yo" pattern in that students move between difficult and easy books.

In her first-grade classroom, Carol Donovan from the University of Alabama conducted a study about students' self-selection of books over the course of two academic years. Donovan used Cunningham's four-block literacy program in her classroom and allowed her students to choose books from the classroom library during the self-selected reading block. Over the two years of her study, she discovered the following:

> In both Years 1 and 2, girls selected about half of their books above their reading levels (54.1%; 46.7%), around 17% (14.8%; 18.6%) at their levels and a little more than a third (31.1%; 34.7%) below their levels. Years 1 and 2 boys' overall selections were very similar to those of girls with well over about half the selections (69.4%; 77.3%) above their reading levels, around 11% (13.9%; 10.7%) at their levels, and around 15% (16.7%; 12.1%) below their reading levels. (Donovan, Smolkin, & Lomax, 2000, p. 318)

Donovan also looked at the book selections through the students' reading abilities. She found similar results as previously conducted studies found: low-ability students tend to choose books that are too difficult for them while high-ability students select few books that are beyond their reading level.

Donovan et al. (2000) went a little further and looked at the students' storybook selections versus their informational book selections. They discovered that "children were

spending about half of the times they selected storybooks with texts of readabilities at or below their reading levels" (p. 318). When students chose informational books, Donovan et al. found that "more than two-thirds (73.1%, Year 1; 74.9%, Year 2) of all the information books selected by children were above their reading level" (p. 321). Thus, Donovan, Smolkin, and Lomax's study of first-graders' book selections showed that "low- and average-ability first-grade readers, and even high-ability readers (to a lesser extent). . . impressively select books that are beyond their reading level" (p. 325). The students tended to choose books that were on a second grade readability level. Educators thus raise the question of why students choose books that are too difficult.

There are many reasons why students may spend time with books that are too difficult. Donovan, et al. (2000) state that the students may not realize the books are too difficult, maybe students wanted to read books that "good readers" (p. 326) read, or maybe "the same materials that proved interesting to high-ability readers also proved interesting to lower-ability readers" (p. 326). Kragler and Nolley (1996) state that students often focus more on the topic than on the difficulty level when they choose a book. When they did a study on book selections of fourth graders, they found that students chose books that were recommended to them by peers. Students also chose books that appealed to them physically (they liked the cover, or the book looked exciting). Other students chose books because they wanted to learn about the topic of the book. For example, the students wanted to learn about Abraham Lincoln, dirt bikes, or money. A few fourth graders in this study did select a book based on the "fit of the book" (p. 359). The students who chose a book based on its "fit" did so by using strategies such as flipping through the book, looking at the text and words, and reading the first and last paragraphs. However,

students who used such strategies to determine the "fit" of the book used these strategies in isolation; no one used a combination of the strategies (Kragler, 2000).

Another reason students chose the books that they did was because of the book characters or authors. Students tended to select series books that had the same characters in them or books by the same author. For instance, one fourth grader stated, "I really like Joshua Adams" (Kragler, 2000, p. 136). According to Kragler (2000):

> Reading a book from a familiar series was the second most cited reason why the below-average readers chose a book, and the third area mentioned by the other readers in the study. The below-average readers seemed to find a particular series (or author) and stick with it rather than venturing out into different books. (p. 136-137)

Below-average readers at times select books which they have first seen as a movie or video. In Donovan, Smolkin, and Lomax's (2000) study of first graders mentioned previously, she found that boys often would choose a book because they wanted to "'play' through or with the informational books" (p. 328). She gives the example of a group of boys, after reading an informational story about spiders, wanting to pretend that they were different types of spiders. According to Wigfield (1997), "The high number of difficult information books chosen [during Donovan's study of first graders' book selections] supports Hunt's (1970/1990) notion of readers' ability to 'transcend the frustration level' when interest is high, and interest in a topic is an important element of intrinsic motivation to read" (as cited in Donovan et al., 2000, p. 329). This brings up an important point about students' interest level helping them to read through a difficult text.

In Worthy and Sailors' (2001) article, "'That Book Isn't on my Level': Moving Beyond Text Difficulty in Personalizing Reading Choices," one fourth grader who disliked reading

because the books on his level "(e.g., books in the 'I Can Read It All by Myself' series)" (p. 235) were insulting, started reading again and made progress because a tutor helped him read more difficult texts about wrestling (a topic this student loved). This student was willing to struggle through the text because of his interest in the topic. Another tutor discovered the same idea as the tutor who worked with the boy who loved wrestling. If students are interested in the topic and are reading books that are age-appropriate, these factors will help them "transcend [their] level of reading proficiency" and make them "'willing to struggle through the text'" (Worthy & Sailors, 2001, p. 235). Thus, when students have interest or expertise in a topic, they are more motivated to read books that may not be "on their level."

A third tutor realized that "people who choose to read are those who find reading personally meaningful" (Worthy & Sailors, 2001, p. 234) when working with a teenage girl. This teenage girl, Marta, struggled with reading until her tutor got her books that were on her instructional reading level (third grade). At first, Marta liked reading these books because she was successful; however, she soon became bored with the books' content. As a result, Marta's tutor decided to introduce her to several Judy Blume books and helped her read through these stories. Because these books were more age-appropriate and spoke to Marta on a personal level, she was willing to struggle through them and soon was able to read as well as the other students in her class. Students are more motivated to read books that are "personally interesting" (Worthy & Sailors, p. 234) to them.

As was illustrated above, students like to read books that they can draw personal connections (as in Marta's situation) or books that speak to their interests and expertise (as in case of the boy who loved wrestling). Bishop (1992) and Macedo (2000) note that students also like to read books that embrace their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic identities (as cited in Worthy

& Sailors, 2001). One African-American boy, Akira, was able to decode words at a fourth grade level but was not engaged in the text, thus affecting his comprehension. However, "reading and discussing an illustrated book of Martin Luther King's most famous speech (King, 1997) seemed to suddenly bring Akira to life, as he recounted his grandfather's interest and activities in the Civil Rights movement during the 50s" (Worthy & Sailors, 2001, p. 236). This boy became more engaged in his reading after he began reading this book as well as others about civil rights and African Americans.

The importance of students relating to books about their culture is also illustrated in the following example about Carolina, a fifth grader who immigrated to the United States from Mexico when she was eight. This fifth grader was in the bilingual program at school; however, in fifth grade, "she was expected to read only in English" (Worthy & Sailors, 2001, p. 236), so she could prepare to take a basic competency test which she needed to pass in order to go to the middle school. Even though Carolina learned English quickly, "she resisted American culture and English literacy and turned up her nose at the books other girls her age were reading" (p. 236). To help Carolina get turned onto read, her tutor found "books written by Mexican American authors; Carolina was particularly enthralled with bilingual picture books and books that included Spanish words embedded in English text, which she would pronounce with a proud flair" (p. 236). Introducing books that reflected Carolina's culture hooked her onto reading. Thus "reader and context factors play a crucial role in engaging students in reading" (p. 232).

Worthy and Sailors (2001) state that the "'fit' or difficulty level of a book" (p. 229) is important to consider; however, as Worthy, Prater, Patterson, Turner, and Salas (1997) point out, "Students who have challenges with reading or who are resistant to reading are even more in need of personally engaging books and materials, in addition to being appropriate for

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instruction" (as cited in Worthy & Sailors, 2001, p. 233). It is important that students are successful when they read. One way that students are successful is by being engaged in their reading. Donovan, et al. (2000) "suggest that even low-ability children can and do engage meaningfully with interesting, high-level-readability books, when given opportunities to do so" (p. 330). Teachers can provide these opportunities for students by offering a variety of quality reading materials, genres, and levels to choose from. "Allowing children to select the books they prefer, regardless of their reading level, as one aspect of the total reading program provides children opportunities to build background knowledge and vocabulary by working in concert with more knowledgeable peers" (Donovan et al., 2000, p. 330). Teachers can also teach students strategies for selecting appropriate books or provide guidance to students when selecting books. As Cunningham, Hall, and Sigmon (1999) state:

> If children consistently pick books that are much too easy for them, teachers may recommend more challenging books. Likewise, if children select books that are much too hard, teachers may show them how to choose books closer to their level. (p. 32-33)

Teachers can provide this guidance during a conference in which the student and teacher discuss the book the child has read. Even though the teacher guides the students to choose books that are a right "fit" for them, it is important that students individually select a book that is "challenging yet understandable" (Ediger, 1999, p. 3).

A key component of the self-selected reading block is that students choose books that they want to read. Even though it is important that the books they choose are a right "fit" for them, studies show that students can read books that are more challenging if they are interested in them. Thus, motivation does influence students' selection of books. Studies also show that students do not always select books that are at a "right fit" for them. However, given guidance

and "many opportunities to choose, read, and reflect on their reading" (Worthy & Sailors, 2001, p. 237), students will be able to select books that are appropriate for them. If students are involved in their reading such as selecting their own books, they will be more likely to become independent readers as well as lifelong readers. As Boulware and Foley (1998) state:

> When children finish their formal years of schooling, they are no longer required to read for pleasure. Therefore, if classroom teachers, librarians, and parents wish to instill in children a 'life long' love of reading, they need to be aware of the importance of the self-selection process in recreational reading—both inside and outside of the school environment—and not require that students select free reading materials at their independent or easy reading level. (p. 21)

Students' interest in books will be greater if they are allowed to self-select the books they read.

Procedures

The following procedures were followed when conduting this study:

1. Receive approval from University's Committee on Human Research to conduct study (March 17, 2003)

2. Receive written permission from assistant superintendent of county (February 14, 2003), principal of school, and classroom teacher (March 11, 2003). The subjects are first graders in a classroom in a Title I elementary school on the east coast of the United States. This class was chosen because they are in a classroom in which the books are leveled using Reading Recovery levels (a project which began in January).

3. Classroom teacher assigns an identification number (i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc.) to each student to maintain confidentiality (March 21, 2003).

4. Go to the first grade classroom during their self-selected reading block (approximately 30 minutes long). (10 days over the course of March 24-April 17)

5. Ask the classroom teacher for the list of students with their assigned numbers and reading levels (pre-primer, primer, first grade, above first grade). Example: Student 1: Primer (March 24)

6. A variety of books are displayed around the classroom on shelves, in book baskets, and in and on the students' desks (Throughout the study). The books that are on display in the classroom consist of books that revolve around themes in the students' Social Studies and Science units, books that the teacher introduces to the students, and books that revolve around the month's theme. The books in the book baskets are a mixture of books on different reading levels that the teacher picks. On a weekly basis, the teacher rotates these book baskets among the five tables where students sit.

7. During the self-selected reading block, the teacher reads a book aloud to the students (five minutes). Then, students choose one to three books to read for fifteen minutes.

8. After reading, each student gets a post-it note which is placed on the book that he/she chooses. The student's assigned ID number is on this post-it note. Each student lists where they got the book according to the following system: B = Basket at their table, C = Classroom Library, S = School Library, and H = Home, * = Read-aloud book. This coding system is listed on the chalkboard, and the classroom teacher explains it to the students. *Note: The process of the post-it notes was modeled and tried two different ways before the study began. One way consisted of placing a post-it note on all the books each student read and the other way consisted of placing a post-it note on just the last book read. The process of placing a post-it note on all the books each student read was too complicated for the students and took too much time. Thus, it was decided that only the last book would be post-it noted and collected.*

9. After the students complete this task, the classroom teacher collects the books with the post-it notes on them from the students and gives them to the researcher.

10. The researcher takes the books and fills in the following information on the chart (see appendix A): date, assigned ID number of student, reading level of student, level of book chosen, and location of the book chosen.

11. The researcher uses a Reading Recovery Stages of Literacy Development chart (see appendix B) as a reference when entering whether the books chosen were on the students' instructional levels. (This is done each day immediately following the self-selected reading block).

12. This process is repeated for 10 days (March 24, 25, 26, 27, April 3, 4, 10, 14, 15, and 17, 2003) over the course of a month.

13. Enter data collected into chart on computer and report findings (April 28, 2003).

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Findings

The research question was: Do first grade students choose books on their instructional reading level during the Self-Selected Reading Block of their school day? Where students got their books for the Self-Selected Reading Block was also examined. Data were collected for ten days during the months of March and April, specifically, March 24, 25, 26, 27, April 3, 4, 10, 14, 15, and 17. Each day the students were observed for approximately thirty minutes during their self-selected reading block (12:10 to 12:40).

Each day the classroom teacher began this reading block by reading a book aloud to the students. The books she chose to read aloud to the students over the course of time observed consisted of poetry books, seasons books, and Easter books. The teacher read aloud lasted approximately ten minutes each day. The teacher also reminded the students of their three objectives: "Self-select appropriate text based on: interest, the five-finger method, or familiarity with the author, genre, and/or text features." She often stated that she wanted to see the students practice good self-selected reading skills. In addition, during the teacher read aloud, the teacher and students would discuss the book (the characters, events, similar situations they may have had). They also discussed the book's genre and author. The students would often comment about the book, saying, "I remember reading a book about that author or character."

After the teacher read aloud, students would have fifteen minutes during which they chose books from their book baskets at their tables, books from the classroom including the read aloud book, or books they brought from home. Books in the classroom library consisted of books from the gutter, theme basket, or other book baskets in the room. Books from the gutter are books that are new or deal with the month and/or season. Books in the theme basket are books that the teacher has previously introduced and books that deal with the theme the students

are working on in Social Studies, Science, and Math. Books in baskets around the room as well as the book baskets at each table are a mixture of books on different reading levels that the teacher selects. Finally, books from the school library are either books the students checked out or books that the teacher selected from the library and placed in the classroom library for a period of time.

During the fifteen minutes the students had to self-select books and read, they chose several books. There appeared to be a lot of active reading and interacting with books occurring. For example, students would whisper when reading the books, sharing what they read with another student or with their teacher, and pointing to the words. While students were reading quietly at their seats, the teacher walked around the room observing the students' reading habits and asking them about their books. She also had students working with her one at a time during which she had them read from their book and tell her about what they had read. The teacher also administered the Bader (a reading inventory to determine the reading level of a student). At the end of the fifteen minutes, a post-it note was passed out to each student. On this post-it note, the students wrote their assigned identification number (1, 2, 3, etc.) and where they chose the book (B = Basket at their table, C = Classroom Library, S = School Library, H = Home, and * = Read-aloud book). This post-it note was placed on the last book that each student read, and then these books were collected.

The first grade class classroom where this study was conducted had eighteen students in it. The students' reading levels ranged from readiness, pre-primer, primer, and on or above first grade. A total of 168 books were collected during the ten days of data collection. Out of the 168 total books, 19 were chosen that were below the instructional level, 61 were chosen on the instructional level, and 88 were chosen above the instructional level (see appendix C for the

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Culmination of Results Table). Thus a total of 107 out of 168 books (63.7%) were not on the students' reading levels while 61 out of 168 (36.3%) were on the students' reading levels. Thus, this study shows that these first grade students tend to choose books that are not on their reading levels.

The second part of the research question was: Where do students get their books for the Self-Selected Reading Block? During this study, students chose books mainly from the classroom library (90 out of 168 books). The next highest number of books (66 out of 168) were chosen from the book baskets at the students' tables. Only 9 out of 168 books were chosen from the school library and 3 out of 168 books were brought from home. Thus, the results from this study show that these students tend to choose books from the classroom library.

This study did have some limitations. It was of short duration (10 days) and included a small sample size. The only subjects in this study were eighteen first grade students. Also during the time data were collected, one student was only there for one day over the ten days; this student's data were not utilized in this study. Another student came into the study on the fifth day of data collection; his data were used. Five other students were absent one to three times over the course of the ten days. Because the ten days fell over the course of four weeks, this could affect the results of this study. The students' reading levels may have changed some over this time.

Another limitation was that only the last book from each student was collected. The process of the post-it notes was modeled and tried two different ways before the study began. One way consisted of placing a post-it note on all the books each student read and the other way consisted of placing a post-it note on just the last book read. The process of placing a post-it note on all the books each student read was too complicated for the students and took too much time.

Thus, it was decided that only the last book would be post-it noted and collected. The books not collected from the students may have been on a different level than the last book collected; this would change the results of this study.

Summary

The research question was: Do first grade students choose books on their instructional reading level during the Self-Selected Reading Block of their school day? Where students got their books for the Self-Selected Reading Block was also examined. The first grade students were observed for thirty minutes each day for 10 days over the course of two months during their Self-Selected Reading Block. During the self-selected reading block, the students appeared to be doing active reading by reading and sharing what they read with others. At the end of each self-selected reading block, the last book each student read was collected. A post-it note with the student's identification number and where the students selected the book was on each of the books collected.

This class of eighteen students' reading levels ranged from readiness, pre-primer, primer, and on or above first grade. A total of 168 books were collected during the ten days of data collection. The findings of this study show that these first grade students tend to choose books that are not on their instructional reading levels. The second part of the research question was: Where do students get their books for the Self-Selected Reading Block? The results from this study show that these students tend to choose books mainly from the classroom library.

Personal Implications

In this particular study, students chose books that were not on their instructional reading level. In fact, more students chose books above their reading level; thus, this shows that these

students were not afraid of books that were too difficult for them to read. This class of first grade students appeared interested in the books they chose, and they often stated, "I like this book," or "I remember another book by this author." Based on the findings of this study, it is important to provide a variety of books for students to read. As a classroom teacher, I should provide different types of books (different genres, nonfiction, fiction, and poetry) as well as books on different reading levels. The students in this particular study did not seem to mind if the book was too difficult or too easy as long as it was of interest to them. This shows me that I should provide books that are of interest to my students and on their reading level. This could be accomplished by having students complete reading interest surveys and select on level books for the students accordingly. A key component of the self-selected reading block is that students choose books that they want to read. I want my students to be actively involved in their reading as well as motivated to read; I can do this by allowing them to select their own books.

When students were selecting books during this study, they most often chose books from the classroom library. As a classroom teacher, I need to make sure I provide a variety of books in my classroom that students will like, so they will be motivated to select these books. Since students did not choose books from the school library, baskets at their tables, or home as often, I need to also find ways to promote these books, so students will want to select them as well.

Professional Implications

It is important to allow students to self-select the books they want to read. Rasinski (1988) stated, "student interest and student choice should be an integral part of an elementary reading program if students are going to be turned onto reading and become lifelong readers" (as cited in Kragler & Nolley, 1996, p. 354). The teaching profession needs to be aware that

students who are involved in their reading will be more motivated and engaged, thus they will be more successful readers. This study of whether students choose books on their instructional reading level during the Self-Selected Reading block shows that students tend to choose books that were not on their reading level. Students seemed to be more interested in the book's content rather than its readability. This shows teachers that it is important to provide a variety of books on different reading levels that are of interest to students. Teachers should strategically match students' reading levels with books that are of interest to the particular age group. In addition, teachers should guide students in their reading, so they can grow in their reading ability and choose books that are on their reading level and of interest to them. The goal is to allow students to be involved in their reading, so they can become independent readers as well as lifelong readers.

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Date of Observation: _____

		Instructional Level of Book Selected During Self-Selected Reading			Location of Book Selections			
Assigned Number of Student	Reading Level of Student	Below Instructional Level	On Instructional Level	Above Instructional Level	Basket at Table	Classroom Library	School Library	Home

Stages of Literacy Development

	Early Emergent			Upper Emergent						Early Fluent							Fluent			
			PP1		PP2		PP3			Primer			1-2				2			
	A	B	C	C	D	D	E	E	F	F	G	G	H	H	I	I	J	K	L	M
Grade Level	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Kindergarten			ON			ABOVE														
Early First Grade				ON								ABOVE								
First Grade 3rd Q				BELOW						ON							ABOVE			
First Grade 4th Q					BELOW								ON					ABOVE		
Second Grade 1st Q					BELOW												ON			
Second Grade 2nd Q					BELOW												ON			
Second Grade 3rd Q					BELOW												ON			
Second Grade 4th Q					BELOW														ON	

1-20 levels-Reading Recovery©

Letter levels-I.C. Fountas and G.S. Pinnell, Guided Reading, Good First Teaching for All Children. N.H.: Heinemann, 1996.

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Date of Observation: **CULMINATION OF RESULTS**

		Instructional Level of Book Selected During Self-Selected Reading			Location of Book Selections			
Assigned Number of Student	**Reading Level of Student**	**Below Instructional Level**	**On Instructional Level**	**Above Instructional Level**	**Basket at Table**	**Classroom Library**	**School Library**	**Home**
1	Readiness		1	9	1	7	1	1
2	P I+	5	4	1	7	2 (*)		1
3	1+	1	5	4	1	5 (**)	4	
4	P I	1	1	7		9 (**)		
5	1+		8	2	6	4		
6	PP I+		4	6	6	4		
7	1	1	6	3	9	1		
8	P I+	**MOVED**						
9	P I+		4	5	1	6	2	
10	1+	1	5	3	1	6 (*)	1	1
11	P I+	4	5	1	9	1		
12	P I		3	7	1	9 (*)		
13	1+	2	1	4	3	4 (****)		
14	P I		3	7	2	8		
15	Readiness		1	9	4	6		
16	PP I +	1	4	5	2	8		
17	Readiness		2	6	2	5	1	
18	P I+	3	4	3	6	4		
19	Readiness			6	5	1		
TOTALS (168 books total)		19	61	88	66	90	9	3
PERCENTS		11.3%	36.3%	52.4%	39.3%	53.6%	5.4%	1.8%

Reading Levels of Students:
Readiness
PP = Pre-Primer
P = Primer
1 = First grade

I = instructional on that level
I+ = independent on that level
+ = reading above that level

* = Read aloud Book
Number of times * is listed = the number of times read-aloud book was chosen.

168 Total Books were Recorded
Number listed in each block = number of times student chose book at that level/ chose book in that area during the ten days of data collection

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Corporate Source:	Publication Date: May 2003

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